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ABSTRACT

To assist state-level educational policy makers, information about the needs of rural adults and barriers to their participation in educational programs was studied in seven northwestern states. Telephone interviews gathered information from educational providers (approximately 6 in each state) and 47 rural adult learners from the region. In each state, responses were grouped separately for learners and providers under five types of barriers to participation: institutional, informational, psychological, personal/situational, and state policy. Comparisons were made across states and between learners and providers, and aggregate lists of barriers for the Northwest were constructed. Barriers listed by providers and learners, respectively, were highly similar across states. Learners' and providers' estimates of the relative importance of specific barriers were much the same. Overwhelmingly, both groups felt that, when compared with their urban counterparts, rural adults do not have equal access to educational opportunities. The additional problems of rural learners included distance and transportation, increased costs, declining incomes, limited access to instructors and advisors, limited support services, and lack of access to materials and resources. This report includes specific recommendations for each state studied as well as recommendations in the areas of state policy, institutional procedures, community responsibilities, and rural education practitioner responsibilities. (JHZ)

ED275462

BARRIERS TO RURAL ADULT EDUCATION

A Report of the Northwest Action Agenda Project

September 1986

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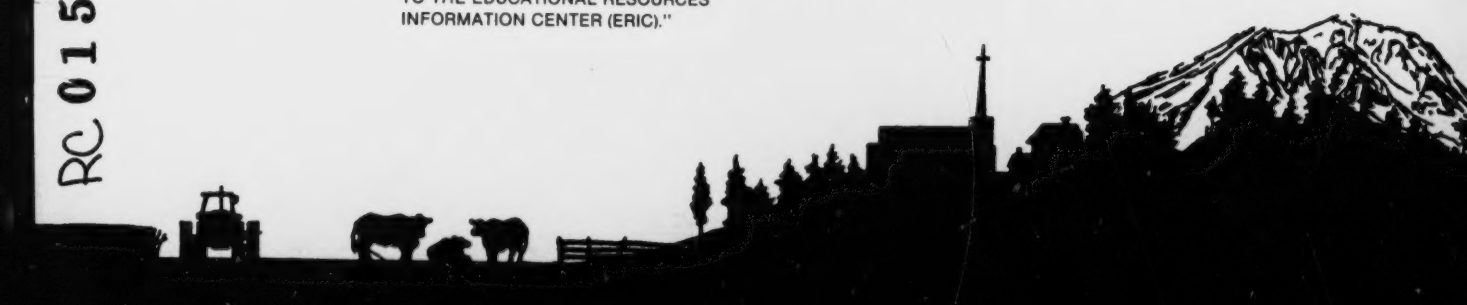

NORTHWEST ACTION AGENDA PROJECT

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BARRIERS TO RURAL ADULT EDUCATION:

A SURVEY OF SEVEN NORTHWEST STATES

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A Report of the Northwest Action Agenda Project

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September 1986

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recently there has been increasing national and regional interest in providing postsecondary educational opportunities for adults. However, a lack of data on the needs of rural adults and barriers to their participation in educational programs has limited program expansion and financial support for rural programs.

In an effort to gather this data for the Northwest, the Northwest Action Agenda Project, located at Washington State University in cooperation with the University of Idaho and partially funded by an award from the Fund for the Improvement for Postsecondary Education through Kansas State University, interviewed educational providers and rural adult learners in seven states. States surveyed include Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming.

The educational providers surveyed were selected on a reputational basis for their knowledge of rural adult education activities in their respective states. They are employed in a wide variety of positions, from state-level educational administration to line staff in rural outreach programs. Approximately six providers per state were interviewed.

Forty-seven rural adult learners from the same states were also interviewed. Learners were selected by members of the project's steering committee, and, hence, the sample was biased in favor of individuals who were already enrolled in or had completed educational programs. The demographic characteristics of the learners were similar to those identified by McCannon (1985); that is, learners were predominantly white, female, and married.

A Delphi telephone interviewing technique was used. Respondents (both learners and providers) were asked questions from separate structured interview schedules. After the first round of information gathering was completed, respondents were provided with a summary of their peers' responses and were asked to comment and to suggest additions and deletions. Very few of the barriers initially identified by the providers or learners were deleted or substantially altered on the basis of the follow-up interviews.

Responses were grouped separately for learners and providers in each state using categories from Darkenwald and Merriam (1982): institutional, informational, psychological, and personal/situational barriers. The project staff developed the additional category of state policy barriers. Comparisons were then made across states and between learners and providers. Finally, aggregate lists of barriers for the Northwest were constructed.

Barriers listed by providers and learners, respectively, were highly similar across states. Learners' and providers' estimates of the relative importance of specific barriers were much the same. Overwhelmingly, both groups felt that, when compared with their urban counterparts, the rural adult does not have equal access to educational opportunities.

Findings

Key findings of the study include:

1. Support from the family and local community, life experiences, determination to succeed and adaptability/resiliency were found to be important factors for learners in overcoming barriers. Virtually all learners felt being supported in their personal decision to start taking classes was a significant factor in beginning educational programs.

2. Educational providers frequently mentioned that rural adults with limited educational backgrounds are more likely to pursue academic programs if first they participate in re-entry programs or attend noncredit classes and have a "good experience."

3. Geographic isolation, weather, class scheduling, family responsibilities, time constraints, and limited access to advanced instructional technology were identified as barriers. However, most respondents were successful in overcoming these barriers.

4. The high cost associated with going back to school was not an overriding consideration in learners' decision to return to school. The inability to obtain financial aid for part-time students was cited by some learners as a problem. The "hassles" associated with not being on campus and obtaining financial aid were universally noted as a barrier. Furthermore, the decrease in discretionary income resulting from returning to school was exacerbated by the decline in rural economic conditions.

5. Lack of information about programs, course offerings, and services was identified as a barrier to participation in educational programs. Concomitantly, all of the states lack comprehensive listings of programs, financial aid packages, and support services.

6. Educational providers frequently mentioned lack of counseling and advising on personal, financial, and academic matters as a significant barrier. Learners often cited difficulty in accessing instructors and counselors.

7. The limited variety and availability of classes, and limited or no access to libraries, laboratories, and computers were cited by nearly all respondents as major barriers to learners pursuing their educational goals.

8. Distant learner technologies, while allowing greater opportunities for institutions to extend their offerings to rural areas, are not a substitute for personal contact with instructors and counselors. However, certain approaches to using high technology, e.g., having a counselor or local educator assist learners through their initial discomfort using this technology, may be useful in mitigating learner fears.

Recommendations

The rural adult learner is a legitimate student, and should have equal access to public higher education. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations are offered in four areas: state policy, institutional procedures, community responsibilities, and for rural education practitioners. Each set of recommendations is preceded by a summarization of the problem within that sphere of influence.

State Policy Barriers. In the Northwest, there is a general absence of state policies directed towards the rural adult learner. This does not reflect a lack of viable program models, but rather an absence of recognition of the rural learner and his/her needs. Unfortunately, with limited public sector revenues, the predominance of legislative influence from metropolitan areas, and the high cost associated with distance education programming, rural residents are at a disadvantage with respect to educational opportunities. Overcoming these barriers requires the concerted attention of state governments.

Recommendations on State Educational Policies:

1. In recognition of the higher costs associated with rural delivery, the criteria for resource allocation in higher education should be equal outcomes (students successfully completing programs) rather than equal inputs (amount budgeted per student).

2. Each state should examine the impact of their funding formulas on the rural learner and his/her need for support services. Mechanisms should be developed to provide off-campus advising and counseling services.

3. Guidelines should be developed which guarantee the equal treatment of part- and full-time students in regard to financial aid eligibility. Financial aid allocation decisions now rest with institutions, allowing a wide range in interpretations. This arrangement often works to the disadvantage of the part-time student.

4. States should establish a rural office in conjunction with the state higher education board or similar agency to provide needed focus on the rural adult learner. Responsibilities of the office should include fostering collaboration among institutions and compiling a central file of courses and degree programs available from all providers in an area and making it available to assist rural adult learners in becoming aware of educational offerings.

5. Regions with well educated citizens are likely to show more economic growth that areas where educational attainment is lower (Cross and McCarten 1984). Consequently, educational programs in rural areas are critical to rural economic development and should be included in economic development planning.

Institutional Barriers. Historically, institutions of higher education have viewed their service districts as catchment areas for the youthful

student. Course timing and format have been geared to the needs of 18 to 22 year-old, residential students. A bias toward on-campus instruction and traditional modes of operation have prevented institutions from reaching out to non-traditional, adult students. Barriers specific to individual institutions serving the rural adult include inflexibility in course offerings, lack of support services, and failure to adequately publicize programs and services.

Recommendations on Institutional Policies:

6. The allocation of institutional resources should not be based exclusively on class size.

7. Program offerings should be based upon a needs assessment and targeted appropriately. General studies programs should not be viewed as a panacea for rural education.

8. Successful rural education programs often require collaboration among institutions and between institutions and rural communities. Partner- ships and consortia should be encouraged to enable learners to take advantage of a well articulated curriculum.

9. Institutions of higher education should develop mechanisms to support the adult learner's decision to return to school. These support services should be aimed at the family unit in recognition of its importance as a support base for the successful learner. This is particularly true for counseling and child care services. Planning for child care should take into account the rural learners' preference for these services within their own communities.

10. A principal complaint of adult learners is the lack of academic counseling available off campus. Institutions should consider utilizing experienced learners or teachers in the K-12 system as peer counselors to assist the returning student.

11. Technologically based instructional delivery should be multi institutional so as to avoid the proliferation of non-compatible systems.

12. Person to person contact is needed to augment the technological delivery system. The importance of "high touch" as part of the "high tech" approach is particularly important for students in rural areas.

13. Distance learning technologies should be utilized to offer support services like advising and to disseminate information on financial aid as well as for conducting courses.

14. Institutions should explore mechanisms that guarantee the availability of library, laboratory, and computer resources to the rural learner.

15. Institutions should develop alternative means for organizing outreach faculty that include the incorporation of advising and counseling responsibilities into position descriptions. These responsibilities must be supported by the institutional faculty reward structure.

16. Faculty teaching in rural areas should receive in-service training on the educational needs of rural learners as well as on adult learning styles.

17. Institutions should provide staff development opportunities to support the multiple roles of the rural practitioner.

Rural Community Barriers. While many educators have assumed a devaluation of postsecondary education among rural residents, this research refutes any such lack of interest. Clear evidence exists that many rural people want to participate in lifelong learning opportunities. They recognize the need for further personal and professional development. The lack of educational opportunities is not the fault of rural communities; however, any strategy to overcome existing barriers requires their involvement in the educational planning process. Barriers identified in the community were largely related to a lack of the leadership and community organization necessary to advocate local needs at the state and institution level.

Recommendations to Rural Communities:

18. Community groups need to assume the responsibility for representing local needs to policymakers and educational providers in their regions.

19. Community groups must become partners in the process of determining educational needs in their areas, and in meeting those needs.

20. Local leadership must assume some responsibility for the instigation of training and development projects in their communities.

Rural Education Practitioners. Rural education practitioners are not often trained to assume the multiple roles necessary for working in rural areas. Additionally, over identification with institutional types (e.g., the community college system, 4-year colleges or universities) and an associated ethnocentrism often limit practitioners' effectiveness in interacting with the full range of educational providers.

Recommendations to Rural Education Practitioners:

21. Practitioners are generally tied into institutional or programmatic loyalties and, hence, are often not effective advocates of the comprehensive needs of rural learners. In many instances, a consortium of providers would be a more effective vehicle for conducting needs assessments, program development and implementation, and local leadership development.

22. Rural education practitioners should be knowledgeable of rural issues, the communities, and people they serve.

23. Rural education practitioners, like other educational professionals, must seek professional development opportunities necessary to perform their multiple roles.

This research sponsored by the Northwest Action Agenda Project and reported in this publication makes a positive contribution to the literature on the rural adult learner. Additionally, the report can serve as a vehicle for elevating issues associated with rural education higher on the policy agendas of the respective states.

Although this research is focused on rural learners, implementation of the recommendations would move educational systems towards equal educational opportunity for all adult learners.

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Pullman, Washington
September, 1986

* Additional copies of this executive summary or the complete report, can be obtained through the Office of Community Service, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164.

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in postsecondary education for rural adults is growing. This interest is spurred by the economic problems and consequent unemployment suffered by the major rural industries including fishing, mining, oil, timber, and agriculture. The economic decline has resulted in many people leaving rural areas to seek work. Many of those left behind look to educational resources as one means to counter the current situation by providing access to new job skills and opportunities. Other rural learners are interested in upgrading their credentials to become better prepared to deal with change. The rural learner population is also growing as adults return to complete degrees. The result is an increasing demand for educational services by non-traditional students. Carolino's (1982) study indicates that participation in rural postsecondary education programs is increasing at rates greater than those found in urban areas, and that expectations for educational opportunities in the learner's immediate area are rising. The economic decline suffered by the Northwest has, however, meant a decline in public revenues, so that this unfortunately increased demand is occurring at the same time resources are decreasing.

As a result of the increased attention on rural postsecondary education, educators have come to realize that information on rural learners and their needs is limited. This report is an effort to begin to rectify this situation for the Northwest. This report constitutes the findings of the Northwest Action Agenda Project's research which focuses on barriers to rural postsecondary education.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The Northwest Action Agenda Project (NAAP) is a spin-off from the National Action Agenda for Rural Postsecondary Education (NAARPE) which is sponsored by Kansas State University and the Fund for the Improvement for Postsecondary Education. NAARPE began a regional initiative in 1984 with conferences in several locations. The success of these conferences, particularly in the Northwest and the Appalachian areas prompted the Action Agenda to establish regional projects in both areas. A joint proposal by Washington State University and the University of Idaho established the Northwest project.

The Northwest project was designed with two goals in mind:

- o develop useful information on barriers to rural adult participation in postsecondary education, and

- o begin establishing a network of practitioners, learners, and policy makers interested in the problems faced by rural adults in the region.

To address these goals a project steering committee was formed with one representative from each of the following states: Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Northern California. Representatives were chosen as a result of nominations from people active in rural post-

secondary education. The project selected people representing as many different facets of rural postsecondary education as possible.

The research design called for the steering committee to help in two different ways. Each committee member was asked to supply the project with ten names of rural adults who could enumerate the barriers faced by rural learners. These learners were interviewed by a research assistant utilizing the Delphi technique. Steering committee members also used the Delphi technique to interview practitioners in their state who were knowledgeable about the problems experienced by rural learners.

This approach to data collection led to a consensual statement of barriers facing rural adults seeking education in the Northwest. This report summarizes the information developed from this process.

THE RURAL ADULT LEARNER IN THE LITERATURE

Rural America is characterized by an agricultural tradition, sparse population, isolation, and the presence of small, closely knit communities. These communities are typically long distances from sources of goods and services, are culturally homogeneous and have little or no public transportation (Treadway 1984, Kulvesky and Copp 1981, and McCannon 1985). Rural areas are excellent places to live but are also more likely to have a higher poverty rates, poorer housing standards, and less opportunity for adequate medical care than metropolitan areas. Generally there are fewer public services and opportunities to attract federal and state funds for educational programs. In short, rural areas are disadvantaged in many respects, including equity of educational opportunity (Sher 1977, and Barker 1985).

Rural adults comprise nearly twenty-seven percent of the nation's adult learners (McCannon 1985). Their interests include both degree oriented and non-credit activities (Maes 1984), with occupational advancement and/or personal development as the primary reasons for pursuing education (McCannon 1985).

When McCannon (1985) compared them with urban learners, rural adult learners proved remarkably similar on all variables examined - age and sex, reason for participation in adult education, subjects enrolled in, type of provider, number of courses taken and source of payment. Like their urban counterparts, rural adults have a real need to continue their education. The rural learner and the urban student must meet the same academic and job requirements for advancement. Structural economic change, unemployment, advances in technology, recertification requirements, career changes and continual advancements in knowledge affect both rural and urban residents.

Although the educational needs of rural and urban people may be similar, there are distinct contrasts between the two groups: the most formidable of which is residential location. Rural learners who live in areas of low population density receive fewer educational services and, hence, have less opportunities. The lower income levels of many rural adults, compounded by the high tuition costs and higher associated costs,

as part of their pursuing educational programs, preclude their participation. At the same time, rural households are usually larger than urban households (Dejons 1976; Kreitlow 1971), suggesting a greater need exists for support services. Also, learners in rural areas are highly dependent upon the automobile for travel to learning centers. Poor road conditions, long distances, and increasing fuel and automobile costs have a greater adverse affect on rural citizens than on urban dwellers. (Barker 1984)

On average, rural adults have completed fewer years of formal education than their urban counterparts (Treadway 1984). They often feel too old to "start again," lack confidence in their learning abilities, and/or are apprehensive of how family members and friends may react to their interest in education.

The situational differences between rural and urban adult learners, therefore, by their nature create barriers (see Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982 for a categorization of the problems faced by rural adult learners). Other obstacles to educational access are caused by colleges and universities themselves. Inflexibility in residency requirements, inconvenient scheduling of classes, inappropriate courses, or the requirement that part-time students pay full-time fees limit both interest and participation in adult education activities.

Cross and McCartan (1984) have identified four state approaches to rural adult education. They are the laissez faire, encouragement, direct support approach and intervention. The laissez faire approach continues the urban based, population driven policies of the past. The encouragement approach places the state in the role of facilitator. The direct support approach is most often mentioned with regard to distance delivery systems, where statewide systems are more cost effective. The intervention approach is aimed at the establishment of coordination, clarification of roles, and elimination of turf disputes. This approach has demonstrated some success.

But at the same time, state regulations aimed at reducing duplication of services and controlling the delivery of educational offerings can be blind to rural concerns. Off-campus centers often serve critical functions in reaching rural areas, while duplicating services are offered at the main campus. Experience also suggests that no one provider is necessarily best suited to a given rural area. Consequently, state policies that screen out providers limit the number of communities and learners that will be reached. Finally, avocational and recreational courses, which are most often disallowed in state funding policies, are frequently cited by practitioners as most effective in introducing reluctant learners to the possibilities of continuing education. Adult basic education and literacy programs, for example, often build from the trust gained in avocational and recreational courses (Spears and Maes, 1985).

Lastly, at the national policy level, federal criteria for allocating resources ignore the higher cost of delivering services to rural areas and over estimate the local resources available to support such services (Treadway 1984). Beyond this, federal policy is simply fragmented.

While K-12 rural education concerns are covered at length in the literature, information on rural adult education is sparse. This review, although not a complete discussion, is indicative of the existing research. Our report is an effort to increase the information available, especially as it pertains to the Northwest.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study addressed the following questions: Who are the rural adult learners in the Northwest? What are their educational needs and interests? What educational programs, systems and institutions exist to serve them? What factors act as barriers to (or facilitate) the meeting of rural adult educational needs? To answer these questions, the following research approach was adopted.

A project steering committee was established comprised of a representative from each of the states within the study area. Beyond this geographical representation, various members also represented higher education, state policy-making entities and the rural adult learner. Steering committee members were asked to serve based upon their reputation as individuals knowledgeable of rural adult education and their willingness to commit time and energy to the study.

The steering committee acted as a research group with each member responsible for: 1) identifying and conducting interviews with educational providers within their state, 2) identifying the rural adult learners from their state to be interviewed, 3) voicing the perspective of the stakeholder group they represented, and 4) providing guidance to the study.

Data for the study were collected through a derivation of the Delphi technique utilizing separate open-ended interview schedules for the educational provider and the adult learner samples (see Appendix B). The respondents interviewed were selected for their understanding of some aspect of the research problem and were identified on a reputational/stakeholder basis.

The Delphi technique was chosen as a method for gathering expert opinion in a systematic manner. The technique lends itself to research wherein:

- o the questions under investigation benefit from subjective judgement on a collective basis,
- o the individuals who can contribute to the research have no history of communication and may represent diverse backgrounds,
- o input is needed from more individuals than can effectively interact face-to-face,
- o time and cost is a consideration (Linstone and Turoff, 1975).

All of the above were true for the study.

The derivation of the Delphi technique used closely parallels what Linstone and Turoff (1975) have labelled as the "paper-and-pencil" approach.

> In this situation a small monitor team designs a questionnaire which is sent to a larger respondent group. After the questionnaire is returned the monitor team summarizes the results and, based upon the results, develops a new questionnaire for the respondent group. The respondent group is usually given at least one opportunity to reevaluate its original answers based upon examination of the group response. To a degree, this form of Delphi is a combination of a polling procedure and a conference procedure which attempts to shift a significant portion of the effort needed for individuals to communicate from the larger respondent group to the smaller monitor team.

In the case of this study, the steering committee, with input from the project staff, designed the questionnaire. Steering committee members administered the questionnaire for the educational providers and one of the research associates constructed the adult learner questionnaire. The questionnaires were given face-to-face or over the telephone.

The project staff was responsible for summarizing the results of the first sets of both questionnaires. The staff then developed the second round of questions aimed at verifying and expanding on the responses elicited in the first interviews. The new questionnaires were again administered by the steering committee members to the same individuals they interviewed earlier, and the same research associate again queried the adult learners.

The respondents, in both groups, were given the opportunity to revise their answers based upon their peer group responses. Final results from the interviews were examined jointly by the steering committee and the project staff.

While comparisons and percentages have been presented in this report, it is essential to note the following qualifications.

1. The data are essentially qualitative.

2. The Delphi technique does not incorporate random selection of subjects, although rational selection of subjects is performed to support representativeness of the sample.

3. The learner data is based upon interviews with enrolled or successful students and may not be representative of the views of adult student "drop outs" or other adults who have considered postsecondary education but, for whatever reasons, have not entered the educational system.

4. The interview schedules for educators and learners were not constructed so as to permit one-to-one comparisons of responses on particular issues.

For the above reasons, the percentages presented in this report are heuristic devices to discuss the data, although the frequencies cited are taken from the actual learner data/response counts.

With these qualifications in mind, the data allows for the creation of a picture of the barriers that face the rural learner in the Northwest. Future research efforts need not focus on validating this picture, but should address strategies to overcome the barriers identified and the development of a clearer picture of the educational needs of the rural adult population in the Northwest.

STUDY RESULTS

The following sections present data for the Northwest as a whole. Provider data for the individual states is presented in Appendix A. A state by state breakdown of the learner data is not presented in this report since interstate differences were not significant and the number of learners surveyed in each state was small (total N for learners was 47). However, frequency data on aggregate learner responses is provided in Appendix C.

Rural Adult Learner Findings

A majority (70%+) of the learners interviewed were married, white and female. Approximately 50% had young children at home. Approximately half of the learners lived in small towns. Only two learners lived in or near towns with more than 5000 inhabitants. Most of the learners had completed high school or had a General Education Degree (GED). Sixty percent of the learners were enrolled in a college degree program. Many of the learners were employed, although some (19%) were not.

Perceived Barriers

Time constraints were mentioned most frequently by the learners as a barrier. Many of the learners had to juggle family or job responsibilities while taking classes. Many simply felt "too busy."

A majority (70%) of the learners indicated frustration with the limited variety and availability of classes in their area. Furthermore, most (87%) felt they had limited access to degree programs and credit courses. Some were unable to take courses in their desired major and as a result were simply seeking whatever degree(s) were available in their area.

A number of learners felt the availability of courses was affected by institutional requirements for minimal class sizes. For example, one woman in Idaho noted that it is nearly impossible, in her town of 500 residents, to find the required eight individuals to fill classes. She described "twisting arms" to encourage people to enroll.

Over half of the learners identified distance, travel and geographic isolation as barriers. Many of them live in towns, yet have to commute to

another town to attend classes. Fifty-nine percent of the learners commute 1-5 miles to classes, 20% travel 6-20 miles, and 21% commute 21 or more miles. One woman in Wyoming travels 130 miles round trip to class. She works full time in her hometown and commutes over 1000 miles a month to attend class. Another woman in Alaska has to fly to classes since there are no roads traversing the 10 miles of tundra between her home and the town where classes are held.

Home responsibilities, educational costs and funding were cited as barriers by 55% of the learners. Home responsibilities were a particular concern of women with small children. Other women felt rural living "is more work for a woman." These women have animals to feed, a garden to keep up and yard work to do in addition to the usual home and family responsibilities. Only 15% of the learners felt non-supportive family members hindered their involvement in educational activities.

Almost half (47%) of the learners felt limited access to teachers and advisors is a barrier. Learners who commute noted the difficulty of meeting with their instructors or counselors between classes, while learners taking classes via satellite, videotape, or telephone generally felt these instructional media do not provide them with sufficient or satisfactory contact with their teachers and counselors. Twenty-one percent of the learners felt distance from universities or colleges prevented them from accessing information on financial aid, registration requirements, and other issues.

Differences Between Urban and Rural Learners

Learners were almost unanimous in their feelings that there are significant benefits to living and going to school in rural areas. Many felt the smaller classes, the increased contact among students and between student and instructor, and the support gained from living among family and friends in a known environment were highly positive factors.

On the other hand, there was also strong agreement that rural learners, in contrast to their urban counterparts, are faced with limited course offerings, fewer academic programs, and limited access to materials and facilities. Many of the learners (72%) felt they are culturally deprived because of their lack of access to plays, concerts, lectures and social events.

Differences Between the Adult Learner and Traditional College Students

A substantial percentage (42%) of the learners felt their age, life experiences, an increased commitment to their education, and responsibilities set them apart from traditional college students. The learners also felt they were different from 18-to-22 year-old students because of time restraints related to home and job responsibilities. Some learners reported difficulty studying because of "rusty" skills.

Factors Supporting Rural Adults' Success as Students

Virtually all (96%) of the learners identified making a personal commitment to take classes and following through with that decision as

critical to their academic success. Similarly, most of the learners felt the benefits of living in a small community, support from their family and boss, and financial aid or reasonably priced (in some cases, free) classes were instrumental in enabling them to pursue their educations. Many also felt having classes close by or in the community and flexible instructors were supportive factors. Forty percent of the learners mentioned access to a good babysitter as a supportive factor, while 53% indicated that having older children who are able to care for themselves or who have left the home as important factors in their decision to return to school.

Summary Comments on the Rural Adult Learner Findings

Two major issues emerge from the data on learners. Both are issues of equity and accessibility.

1. Rural adults tied to industries suffering recession are now faced with reduced incomes. At the same time they also pay more than their urban counterparts for educational services. In particular, rural adults often must pay travel costs in addition to tuition and fees. In some cases rural adults must pay for their instructor's salaries and travel costs, in addition to fees for the use of buildings and facilities. One of the learners in this survey, who lives in Idaho, pays twice the normal course fee because she and seven other students in the class are responsible for the instructor's travel costs.

2. While many of the learners do not view distance and commuting time to classes per se as a barrier, these same individuals find it very difficult to find additional time to travel to campus to do library research, to talk to an advisor, or to meet with a financial aid counselor. As one man put it, "My major problem with distance is not getting to my classes, but how remote I am from the facilities." This individual drives 48 miles each way for classes two nights each week.

The data show rural individuals share with urban adults many of the problems of returning to school as an older person (e.g., rusty skills, extensive responsibilities and time constraints). However, in taking classes rural adults face many more problems and barriers than do urban adults. These problems are varied and include distance and transportation, increased costs, declining incomes, access to instructors and advisors, limited support services (e.g., childcare), and lack of access to materials and resources.

Educational Provider Findings

Across the Northwest, states are experiencing economic recession leading to reduced public revenues for higher education. Among the professional educators interviewed, funding was the major barrier identified by the educators. A Washington respondent noted that rural areas in the Northwest "...have not kept up with growth in the rest of the economy. Rural areas don't reap the benefits of national economic growth."

Funding was seen to affect all aspects of educational service delivery, from hiring of staff to purchasing of materials and outreach technology. Economic conditions were also blamed for reduced participation by rural adults in educational programs. Educators frequently mentioned that as local economies deteriorate, rural adults have less discretionary income to spend on education and face increased costs in transportation and tuition/fees.

With the concerns surrounding adequate funding as a back drop, the other barriers enumerated by the educational providers readily lend themselves to the categories developed by Darkenwald and Merriam (1982). The additional category of state policy barriers has been added to account for other problems elicited in the interviews.

State Policy Barriers

Beyond funding, barriers at the state level include lack of commitment to or concern for rural education. Most providers were in agreement on this issue and indicated it in different ways. An educator from Idaho commented that commitment is "extremely limited - support for (rural adult) education is just not there." Also illustrative are comments from the Wyoming interviews:

> "There appears to be a lack of statewide leadership in regard to resources, format, etc...There is no unified mission and goal statement to provide these services either in the institutions or at the state level...the state is confused about what to do, who is to do it, and who is to pay for it."

> "The commitment (to rural adult education) isn't there at the state level. Legislators have no commitment."

> "The state has a low commitment due to citizen apathy."

Funding formulas were also cited as barriers in many states. Requirements for minimum enrollments for classes were frequently mentioned. As one person from Washington said:

> "The legislature needs to realize we won't receive our course (student) quota (for classes offered in the traditional manner in rural areas)...We need a special funding formula for low population density areas that would allow us to run courses that count towards our degree without penalizing the institution financially or lowering enrollment. Every time we run a low enrollment class in one area, we need to run a high enrollment class in another area to balance the full-time-equivalent generation."

Requirements that classes be self-supporting were also seen as barriers, resulting in classes becoming more expensive than rural adults are willing to pay or can afford. Policies and funding formulas which emphasize use of tenured, "full-time-equivalent" instructors and staff preclude the flexible hiring of part-time and outreach staff were seen as barriers to better delivery. As a respondent from Washington said:

"The funding formula...by which legislative appropriations (are made) ...is...geared towards full time instruction. Full time instructors don't go off-campus...We don't have the money to support staff off-campus.... If we were to send a full time counselor to outlying areas we would have to pay mileage. The cost would build up. Because they are tenured we can't get rid of them. Also, the state deals in full time equivalents. If (we) hire a few part time counselors we get another full time equivalent and therefore we can't hire any other part time people because we are over formula."

Lastly, educators noted conflicting budgetary priorities and tensions related to local versus state control of funds as problems.

Institutional Barriers

Educators in all states most frequently cited institutional problems, policies and attitudes when asked to identify barriers to rural adult education.

Certain of the barriers reflect tangible institutional realities. Providers often cited the lack of personnel to perform outreach instruction, program coordination and counseling/advising. The latter is reflected in a comment from Montana:

"...an issue...related to special services...(is) career and vocational counseling. I'm not talking about personal problem counseling; I'm talking about working with people making some career decisions about how they are going to make a living and what kinds of jobs are available. Then maybe a service that says 'OK, if this is what you...want to do, here's where you can go to get the training or the expertise and knowledge that you need to be able to do that.' And I don't think any of those services are provided, at least not in this state, unless you can hook up with an existing institution."

Other providers mentioned the lack of necessary equipment, materials and library resources, and the fact that existing programs of all sorts are overextended and underfunded. A few respondents noted that college faculty are often hard pressed to adequately deliver services within the campus environment and simply do not have the time or administrative support for teaching in distant areas.

The lack of adequate data (and the funding to obtain data) on the rural adult learner and the nature of their educational needs was often seen as a critical issue. Underscoring this are the following comments from Washington and California:

"We need to work on a definition of what 'rural' is and present it in a way that is consistent with other rural areas, (we need) an image of what (the rural constituency) is like and what their needs are."

"Activity (in rural adult education) is inhibited by cost and visibility. Unless we have someone functioning as a broker for small communities, and unless (the) concerns (of those communities) are brought to the central administration(s) of colleges and

universities, those rural areas 'aren't real' to the college(s)...It seems to me it's a question of advocacy for rural areas, and anytime you have 'invisible' people it takes an astounding political effort to get change..."

Other institutional barriers reflect restrictive attitudes. Respondents frequently commented on faculty and administrative biases favoring traditional students and educational modes, accompanied by a general disinterest in rural adult education and a questioning of the quality of outreach programs. This is highlighted in comments from Montana:

"My inclination is the four year colleges are interested in the more traditional students."

"...There is some general recognition that adults should (have the opportunity to) continue (their) education, but there is no emphasis that adults should continue and will need to continue their education. We are still harboring the illusion that we can educate everyone by the age of 25, and that is archaic in today's society."

"A lot of professors are not interested in different approaches" (to rural service delivery).

Also one educator from Oregon stated:
"Faculty members who aren't involved are not as supportive of outreach programs."

Insensitiyity to the needs of rural adults returning to the educational system was also mentioned. One Idaho respondent noted; "...application forms ask for your parents' signature..."; and one educator from Montana stated:

"...the older student has insecurities, the institution has to make adjustments to accommodate (the) differing needs of these students. I don't think the institution as a whole is conscious of this..."

Still other institutional barriers are related to administrative decisions. These include: judging program quality/effectiveness on enrollment numbers; requiring outreach instructors to assume multiple roles as counselors or financial aid advisors, without adequate training or time allocation; offering only general education or Associate of Arts degrees through outreach centers and programs; and offering classes at inconvenient or inappropriate times (especially for adults involved in seasonal work).

Lastly, some institutional barriers reflect political issues. "Turf" problems and lack of cooperation among educational institutions were widely cited. Problems resulting from a lack of coordination are evident in these statements from an Alaska respondent:

"The current system is fractured - it is a nonsystem of disparate branches of the University (of Alaska) offering a variety of programs and courses with little coordination or articulation. Rural students are presented with a confusing and constantly changing array of

services....The burden of reconciling all of these institutional anomalies falls on the student, who winds up paying additional fees only to find that the credits won't transfer from one unit to the next, even thought they are all part of the 'University of Alaska.'"

Personal/Situational Barriers

Providers in all states tended to identify similar personal/situational barriers for rural adults. These included geographic isolation, adverse weather, distance, limited discretionary income, time constraints and being place-bound. Lack of access to telecommunication alternatives was also noted by some providers. One person from Oregon related, "not all people in the state have the same access to television (poor reception) or cable (doesn't exist in the area)."

Educational providers concluded with near unanimity that rural adults, when compared with urban adults, do not have equal access to postsecondary or other educational opportunities. A list of special populations which were more disadvantaged in accessing educational opportunities than the average rural adult were also elicited. Included here were the handicapped, various minority groups, welfare recipients, the elderly, displaced homemakers, single parents, migrant workers and non-English speaking populations.

Psychological Barriers

Feelings of anxiety about returning to school, cultural devaluing of education, peer pressure to not participate, lack of family and community support, and lack of motivation were all cited by educators as psychological barriers faced by rural adults. A variety of intriguing ideas were given as to the content of or reasons for rural adults' presumed fears.

For example, some educators hypothesized fears of essentially "looking stupid" or feeling too old when enrolled in classes with younger persons; rural "pioneer" independence and distrust of outside people and ideas was mentioned by a few respondents; and anxiety about using distance learning technologies was cited. One respondent gave the example of a middle aged student who was so embarrassed about signing up for an adult basic education class that the instructor had to drive around the block to pick up the student to ensure his/her anonymity. As another respondent summed up, "often (rural adults) have a feeling that education isn't for them; they are self inhibiting."

Informational Barriers

Respondents frequently mentioned rural adults' lack of awareness of existing educational services as well as a general lack of information on the course offerings as barriers. The lack of information correlates with the oft-mentioned lack of adequate counseling and advising opportunities in rural areas. Again, a variety of reasons for these barriers were given.

Respondents noted the lack of a comprehensive listing of programs and services in their states, and frequently mentioned this problem along with the lack of intra- and inter-institutional program coordination. In some cases respondents within states disagreed regarding the degree of rural adult awareness of offered programs. An Idaho respondent felt vocational courses, as opposed to academic ones, were adequately advertised and a Montana respondent felt mailed circulars were effective regionally in promoting programs. One respondent stated that, while the outreach courses provided by her community college were advertised locally via newsletters, most of the adult basic education students appeared to learn about the courses by word-of-mouth. Another comment was policy-related; the respondent noted that the state legislature takes a dim view of educators acting as marketing agents to promote their services.

Comparison of Learner and Provider Perceptives

Darkenwald and Merriam's (1982) categories again prove useful as a means for comparing the learner and educational provider findings. In most cases there was remarkable congruence on the barriers facing rural adults seeking postsecondary educational opportunity. There were also some significant disagreements between the two groups on the importance of certain barriers. These similarities and disagreements are described below.

Personal/Situational Barriers

Professional educators cited being place-bound, time constraints and geographic isolation as common barriers for rural adults. Learners responded as follows:

Time Constraints: Most (75%) of the learners acknowledged having home and work time constraints, yet quite a few (66%) noted that the programs they attended provided flexible scheduling.

Place Bound: Some learners (36%) felt child care limited their participation in education and 55% felt house work prevented them from attending classes. On the other hand, a substantial number of learners also felt certain factors supported their participation, for example, forty percent had access to babysitters (husband, wife, etc.).

Geographic Isolation: Many (60%) of the learners felt distance/travel/transportation and geographic isolation (bad roads, weather, mountains) interfered with their participation. A substantial number (43%) said that needed educational programs were too far away. Many rural adults (62%) found having a program in their community helped them participate in classes.

The providers listed high costs and membership in special population groups as barriers to participation in adult postsecondary education. Noted under "high costs" were transportation, tuition and fees, and a presumed drop in discretionary income in rural areas due to economic downturns. Learners responded as follows:

High Costs: Many (55%) felt costs and funding are barriers, while 64% cited financial aid and funding support as helpful to them in attending classes. Seventy-seven percent cited free or reasonably priced programs as conducive to their participation.

Special Population Membership: Due to the small number of learner respondents surveyed and the sample's make up, no statements can be made regarding any unique problems faced by special populations or cultural groups.

Psychological Barriers

Educators listed feelings of insecurity, cultural devaluation of education, peer/family pressure to not participate, and lack of motivation as barriers faced by rural adults.

Peer Pressure: Interestingly, a minority (15%) of the learners acknowledged "nonsupportive family" as a barrier and, in contrast, over 70% felt support from employers, family, and their small communities helped them pursue their education.

Insecurity: Approximately 60% of the learners interviewed felt that, as older individuals, they were able to take school more seriously, have more direction, and benefit from their life experiences. Still, some learners acknowledged feelings of insecurity. A substantial number of the learners felt relearning study habits, feeling out of place in the classroom, and a lack of current knowledge of technology were difficulties for them.

Informational Barriers

Providers cited inadequate counseling and advising as barriers. Also cited was a lack of awareness on the part of learners regarding available educational programs and services.

Information/Awareness: About half (47%) of the learners felt lack of access to teachers and advisors was a barrier, while 21% felt informational gaps constituted a barrier (e.g., difficulty in accessing information on financial aid and admissions policies).

Institutional/State Policy Barriers

Providers identified 19 institutional barriers (e.g., lack of cooperation among educational institutions and judging of program success based on enrollment size) and 6 state policy barriers (e.g., conflicting budgetary priorities and effects of tenure systems on the hiring of part-time rural instructors) to rural adults' participation in educational programs. Many of these, of course, are "behind the scenes" issues of which learners would not necessarily be aware. Learners did, however, comment on barriers resulting from state policies or institutional management practices. Learners listed the following programmatic barriers:

Availability: Most (70%) felt the limited variety and availability of classes was a barrier. Also, when asked how rural adults differ from urban adults, almost all learners (89%) indicated fewer classes and less

variety were available in rural areas. Many (79%) felt limited access to computers and library resources were barriers, and almost all (87%) felt limited access to degree programs and credit classes is more of a problem in rural areas.

"Red Tape": Red tape inhibiting either individual enrollment or development of local classes to be offered was not mentioned by the learners, yet the hassles of procuring financial aid were mentioned by some learners.

Poor Service/Insensitivity: Poor teaching, counseling, and advising due to a lack of personnel or overworked/undertrained personnel, was not specifically mentioned by the learners. Another barrier mentioned by educational providers, that did not show up in the learner data, was the insensitivity of some staff in working with rural adults.

The single overriding area of agreement between educational providers and rural adult learners concerns the question of access to educational opportunities. Overwhelmingly, both groups felt that, when compared with their urban counterparts, the rural adult learner does not have equal access to educational programs.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS: POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND ACTIVITIES

The Northwest Action Agenda project was originally conceptualized as a vehicle for policy change in the designated states. In order to provide the basis for a change, baseline data was needed on the barriers to rural adult postsecondary education from two perspectives: the learner and the provider. The initial phase of the project was designed to collect that data. General conclusions are presented below with the more detailed "findings" and "recommendations" appearing in the Executive Summary.

Conclusions

The seven state investigation affirms the literature on the barriers faced by rural adult learners. While few distinctions were noted between the Northwest and national data, information locally generated for each state is useful in a policy change context. A breakdown of the data state-by-state shows that the barriers to rural adult education are not uniform across the region. The data point to the problems that need the most immediate or greater attention within a given state (see Appendix A).

Few major differences exist between learners' and educational providers' perceptions regarding barriers to participation in postsecondary education faced by the rural adult. Interestingly, between thirty to sixty percent of the learners indicated they were able to meet the challenges of various barriers as they pursued their educations. Yet, the data also provides a rough estimate of the percentage (40-70%, depending on locality and program pursued) of rural adults who truly face continuing difficulties in attaining their educational dreams.

The successful adult learner is always motivated. This study points to the fact that rural adults must be especially so. Yet chances for success are not based solely on the learner's efforts. State policy and institution philosophy, coupled with action, must be supportive.

Implications for Future Research

A good deal is now known about the rural adult learner in the Northwest. Less is known about programs that have mitigated the problems identified by the rural learner. Additional research is needed to identify not only the components of successful outreach programs, but also to hold these program elements to the test of political and financial feasibility. There is no lack of interesting and innovative models. These models, however, have generally been initiated with external (often times Foundation) support. Too often the programs, while apparently successful, have not been subject to systematic review, institutionalized in sponsoring institutions, findings disseminated, or replicated in other areas. Replication of programs in other areas and broad dissemination of findings will be a necessary part of any planned change effort.

Possible Future Activities of the Northwest Action Project

The Northwest Action Agenda Project was conceptualized as a regional center of a national action project. By involving knowledgeable and committed educators throughout the Northwest as a regional steering committee, the project has organizational capacity throughout the region.

Phase I of the project was devoted to data collection and group development. Phase II will entail state-by-state dissemination of findings as a catalyst for change. With the steering committee members as the nucleus, others involved in the project interview process will be recruited into a rural education network. In this manner, 50 to 60 people will become directly involved in the project.

In each Northwest state, a dissemination program will be developed for distribution of the report. Some states are more ready to explore policy changes than others. The regional steering committee will evaluate opportunities and proceed to offer assistance as appropriate. External funds will be solicited to support these efforts. Interventions may be restricted to a presentation of findings before state educational associations or could involve a larger organizational development effort.

In Washington, for example:

- the project report will be distributed to state policy makers in higher education, including the Higher Education Coordinating Board, State Board for Community College Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Washington Round Table. Further dissemination will occur through presentations at professional association meetings.

- Local organizing activity will occur following presentations made at in-service education programs of community educators, cooperative extension faculty, and program associates of the Partnership for Rural Improvement. These community workers will become the "outreach staff" of the project. They bridge the gap between rural areas and educational institutions, and are well positioned for transmitting educational needs to provider institutions.

- During the initial year of dissemination activity, a state-wide meeting will be conducted bringing the actors from the various spheres (state policy makers, institutional leaders, and learners) together to discuss implementation of project recommendations. (Consideration is also being given to a Northwest regional conference to provide for dissemination of findings and sharing of information on program successes and failures.)

Educational change is a long and normally incremental process. It requires valid data on needs, advocates for change, and a supportive environment. This report fulfills one needed element, and suggests a process for future efforts.

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A DISCUSSION OF INTRA-STATE BARRIERS

Alaska

Interestingly, Alaska respondents did not specifically emphasize geography and distance as barriers. This may be due to the fact that Alaskans take these factors for granted as part of life and work in their vast state. Alaskan respondents were much more concerned with factors such as cultural diversity (e.g., the need to provide services to Eskimo and other native peoples), the limitations of telecommunications/high technology in educational service delivery (i.e., technology is not a substitute for personal contact with instructors), the perceived bias in the state university towards traditional students and urban campus delivery systems, and the lack of statewide coordination of educational delivery systems, agencies and curricula.

Northern California

California respondents emphasized funding as a major barrier, and cited specific state funding policies as being deleterious to small colleges and programs. Distance, weather, lack of awareness of services on the part of potential students, and membership in traditionally disadvantaged groups (handicapped, minority, or welfare recipients) were also mentioned as barriers. However, agreement on these barriers was not universal. A few respondents noted that: (1) state policies to cut funding for programs when enrollments decline or services do not pay are appropriate; (2) California's college and university systems are extensive and geographically dispersed, thus mitigating the distance/weather factors; (3) persons belonging to the "traditionally disadvantaged groups" have not responded to previous, extensive outreach attempts and thus cannot be considered to be disenfranchised by system barriers.

Idaho

Idaho respondents were almost unanimous in feeling that their state has no commitment to rural postsecondary education. Respondents were also in agreement that: (1) educational personnel just don't know enough about the rural populations in Idaho to offer adequate programs; (2) geography, isolation and transportation are barriers; (3) technology is no substitute for personal contact with students; and (4) a lack of guidance and counseling as well as students' limited funds and knowledge of available financial resources, inhibits greater utilization of resources. Certain barriers were mentioned by some respondents but questioned by others. Disputed barriers included requirements for minimum enrollments in order to hold classes, "red tape" encountered by communities attempting to organize local classes, lack of awareness of classes offered, and biased attitudes by campus personnel that rural adults are not interested in education. A number of respondents indicated their participation in this survey heightened their own awareness of the issues involved with rural adult education in Idaho.

Montana

Montana respondents frequently cited distance, isolation and long winters as barriers. Other frequent responses were lack of funding, lack of sufficient adult basic literacy programming, lack of technology to outreach distance learners, and lack of a centralized directory/referral service for programs which are offered. Respondents felt there is a lack of adequate counseling and advising and students are unaware of services which are offered. There was some perception that rural adults simply don't value postsecondary education or simply value their independence and refuse outside help. Many of the respondents cited biases in the college and university systems towards traditional students (aged 18-25) and campus-based delivery systems.

Oregon

Oregon respondents presented a variety of barriers although there were no barriers which received unanimous mention. Oregon barriers included: (1) adults who are time or place bound (unable to attend classes due to scheduling/commitments or location); (2) lack of sufficient variety of courses and of specialized courses; (3) lack of sufficient instructors and educational staff due to funding cuts; (4) non-involvement of some collegiate faculty in rural education; (5) expense of running outreach/ rural programs; (6) required minimum enrollments for classes; (7) lack of access to telecommunications equipment/receiving gear, and (8) insensitivity of educational staff to the feelings and needs of rural adults. Some respondents questioned whether rural adults are more time or place bound than urban residents and whether instructors and staff are insensitive to the needs of rural adults. Also, respondents noted that Oregon has good coordination of higher educational systems and telecommunication equipment is currently available in a variety of outreach centers.

Washington

Washington respondents frequently cited lack of funding, remoteness/ distance, learners' lack of awareness of educational services, lack of adequate counseling and advising, inflexible class scheduling, and educators' bias towards traditional, campus-based learning as barriers. Also mentioned were lack of class variety; expense of running rural programs; the existence of large, underserved minority groups (e.g., migrant workers); depressed economies in rural areas and limited discretionary incomes of rural adults; lack of coordination among two- and four year colleges; and limited availability of degree programs above the Associate of Arts (AA) degree. A number of respondents noted a special limitation on rural programs in Washington, due to constitutional funding priorities for the K-12 system. Particular comments were made regarding possible self-inhibition of potential learners, the lack of advocates for rural adult learners, and the inflexibility of state funding formulas for faculty/ staff hiring and class offerings.

Wyoming

Wyoming respondents frequently cited weather, distance and geography as barriers. Most of them also mentioned that, in the Wyoming higher

education system, there is limited opportunity for postsecondary education above the Associate of Arts degree level. Other barriers mentioned were the lack of personnel to carry out local counseling, program evaluation and program coordination; lack of acceptance of Wyoming residents of the lifelong learning concept; and lack of recognition in administrative/faculty circles of the validity of nontraditional students and learning. Other barriers were mentioned by some respondents and questioned by others. These included difficulties in locating qualified instructors in rural areas; rural adults' lack of motivation for education; and lack of adequate library resources and equipment. A few respondents felt rural educational programming is appropriately limited since tax dollars can't be justified for use in small demand areas. Wyoming respondents frequently mentioned, in somewhat different ways, a lack of statewide leadership and a lack of institutional commitment as barriers to rural adult education.

RURAL ADULT LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE

1) Demographic, learner characteristics
   - Name, address and phone
   - Age
   - Sex
   - Ethnic Origin
   - Occupation
   - Rural location

2) Educational background
   - High school
   - College
   - Adult education classes attended in the past
   - Current educational involvement

3) a) What were your personal or educational goals when you entered the program?

   b) What benefits have you received from the program?

4) What has made it difficult for you to participate? What type of barriers have you had to deal with? (eg. distance, time, lack of money, child care, transportation, etc.)

5) What things have made it possible for you to participate in _____? (eg. family support, child care, transportation, financial aide, etc)

6) How do you feel about being an adult and coming back to a learning situation? (eg. how does your experience differ from that of a traditional college student?)

7) How does your situation differ from an urban or non-rural returning or adult student?

8) Finally, is there anything you want to add that we haven't asked about, or anything you want to emphasize?

EDUCATIONAL PROVIDER QUESTIONNAIRE

1) • Name, address
   • Institutional base, type of institution (ie., state university, regional, university, community college, consortium, agency, etc.)
   • Brief description of rural adult education effort

2) How would you characterize your (institution's/agency's) commitment to rural postsecondary education for adults? That of other similar (institutions/agencies) in the state? Where do those commitments come from? What inhibiting factors prevent a higher level of activity?

3) What support-special services do you offer rural adults? What other services are needed?

4) What outreach methods/delivery systems are most successful in reaching rural adults? (eg. video taped classes, etc.)

5) If additional resources were made available to your institution for rural adult education, where should they be placed? Why?

6) In your judgement, do rural adults in (state) have equal access to educational opportunities? If not, why not? Who doesn't get served? What barriers have you observed to their participation?

7) How would you characterize your state's commitment to rural postsecondary education?

8) What would have to happen to strengthen the state's commitment to rural education?

9) Is there anything we should have asked, but omitted?

LEARNER FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

Column number	Response code	Questions and Response Categories	Total
		Number of Respondents by State:	
		Alaska - 5	
		California - 5	
		Idaho - 9	
		Montana - 7	
		Oregon - 6	
		Washington - 5	
		Wyoming - 10	
		Total sample size - 47	
6.		Population by Sex:	
	1	Male	13
	2	Female	34
7.		Ethnic Origin:	
	1	Native American, American Indian	4
	6	Alaska Native	4
	2	Hispanic	2
	4	White	37
8.		Occupation	
	1	Employed	34
	2	Unemployed	3
	3	Full time student	4
	4	Homemaker	3
	5	Retired	2
	9	Other, NA	0
9.		Marital Status:	
	1	Married, cohabitate	28
	2	Divorced	10
	3	Single (never married)	3
	4	Widow	6
	9	NA	0

10. Number of Children:

1	1	2
2	2	13
3	3	7
4	4+	4
5	Older kids (no babysitter required, gone from home)	17
6	No children	4

11. Do You Live in Town?

1	Yes, in town	29
2	1-5 miles out	8
3	6-10 miles out	2
4	11-15 miles out	5
5	16+ miles out	4

12. Estimated Population of Nearest Town

1	Under 500	9
2	501 - 1000	4
3	1001 - 1500	5
4	1501 - 2000	6
5	2001 - 2500	2
6	2501 - 3000	0
7	3001 - 5000	8
8	over 5001	11
9	NA	2

13. Distance from Classes

1	0 - 5 miles	28
2	6 - 10 miles	2
3	11 - 20 miles	7
4	21 - 30 miles	3
5	31 - 40 miles	2
6	41 - 50 miles	2
7	over 51 miles	2
9	NA	1

14. Distance from Nearest Community College or University

1	0 - 5 miles	14
2	6 - 10 miles	3
3	11 - 20 miles	5
4	21 - 30 miles	5
5	31 - 40 miles	3
6	41 - 50 miles	5
7	51 - 60 miles	3
8	Over 61 miles	8
9	NA	1

15. Did You Finish High School?

1	Yes	44
2	No	1
3	GED	2

16. Did You Atttend College Immediately After High School?

1	Yes - degree	10
2	Yes - no degree	21
3	No	16

17. Current Educational Involvement

1)	General Education (ABE, high school)	1
2)	Occupational Training (tech/voc, managerial school, teaching certificate, update certificates, etc.)	8
3)	Community Issues (civic and public affairs, religion, safety)	4
4)	Home and Family Life, Personal Improvement, Recreation, Social Life	6
6)	College Degree Program (AA or Bachelors or advanced degree)	28

		Yes	No
Personal and Educational Goals			
18.	Knowledge goals (to become better informed, satisfy curiosity, to improve self)	36	11
19.	Career goals (get a job, advance in current job, attain a degree, license or certificate)	34	13
20.	Community goals (understand community problems, work for solutions to problems, become a better citizen)	2	45
23.	Escape goals (get away from routine, get away from personal problems)	6	41
24.	Obligation fulfillment (meet educational standards, satisfy employer, continuing educ. for teaching certificate)	4	43
25.	Personal fulfillment (become a happier person, personal enrichment, to fill time)	34	13
27.	Other	1	46
Benefits of Educational Involvement			
28.	Knowledge (become better informed, satisfy curiosity, to improve self)	33	14
29.	Career (expects to or has attained degree, new job and/or advancement)	24	23
30.	Community (understand community problems, work for solutions to problems, become a better citizen)	2	45
32.	Social (networking, meet new people)	5	42
33.	Escape (get away from routine, get away from personal problems)	6	41
34.	Obligation (helped in current job, meet educational standards, satisfy employer, continuing education for teaching certificate)	8	39
35.	Personal (enjoyment, self-confidence, become a happier person, personal enrichment, to fill time)	41	6
36.	Family (become a better parent, spouse)	3	44
37.	Other	2	45

Returning Adult Student

64.	Skills rusty, it is more difficult	21	26
65.	Learning to study and learn again is difficult	20	27
66.	Take school more seriously, have more direction	31	16
67.	Benefits of life experiences, age	28	19
68.	Home responsibilities a burden, adults have added time constraints	26	21
69.	Feel out of place in classroom, age difference obvious	16	31
70.	Burden of working besides school and home	16	31
71.	There is a lot of new technology adults didn't/ haven't learned	11	36
72.	Other	9	38
73.	The Question not applicable to the situation of the learner	5	42

2. Barriers (Question 2 on the second questionnaire)

A)	Childcare	18
B)	Home responsibilities (housework)	26
C)	Cost/funding	26
D)	Time constraints (home and work related)	36
E & F)	Distance/Travel/Transportation	25 & 28
G)	Geographic isolation (bad roads, weather, mountains, etc.)	28
H)	Non-supportive family	7
I)	Restrictive location (would go to other school/program, but too far away)	19
J)	Variety/availability of classes	33
K)	Access to teachers, advisors, etc.	22
L)	Informational barriers (not having easy access to information on financial aid, admission procedures, etc)	10
M)	Other	5

3. How is Your Situation as a Rural Adult Learner Different from that of an Urban Adult Learner? (Question 3, second questionnaire)

A)	Rural - Distance, travel, transportation more of a problem (and the time involved in the travel)	40
B)	Rural - More effected by weather (bad roads, etc)	38
C)	Rural - Less classes available and less variety	42
D)	Rural - Culturally deprived (in terms of lectures, musical events, good professors)	34
E)	Rural - Limited access to computers and good library	37
F)	Rural - Has built-in support system, smaller classes, more personal education	44
G)	Rural - Limited access to degree programs, credit classes	41
H)	No differences to speak of	5
I)	Others?	4

4. What Things Have Helped in Making Your Participation Possible? (Question 4 on second questionnaire)

A)	Support from boss, advisor, program coordinator	34
B)	Family support	38
C)	Financial aid/funding support	30
D)	Having the program close by or in the community	29
E)	Access to a good babysitter (generally husband, mother, wife, etc.)	19
F)	Program is flexible in terms of the times classes are offered, based on students needs	27
G)	Benefits of a small community (support network built-in, smaller classes, not as stressful as in a city)	43
H)	Classes/program free or reasonably priced (could be the result of financial aid)	36
I)	Having older children (either gone or old enough to take care of self)	25
J)	Making a personal decision to go to school or take classes and following through.	45
K)	Other?	0

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